



# Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman  
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## Senior House Democrat Opposes Senate IDEA Funding Measure

The August 4th edition of *National Journal* reports Rep. David Obey (D-WI), the senior Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, strongly opposes language in the Senate version of President Bush's education bill that would require mandatory full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the 26-year old special education law many educators and legislators feel is badly in need of reform.

Obey "fears that money for special education could come at the expense of programs for poor children," *NJ*'s Siobhan Gorman writes, noting that Obey is also concerned about "language in the Senate provision requiring that only 45 percent of the money be spent on special education if the district has met the federal requirements for educating disabled children."

"This is sold as being a big increase in handicapped education when, in fact, virtually half the money can be spent for other purposes," Obey tells *National Journal*.

House Education committee chairman John Boehner (R-OH) has pledged that the House will move to reform and reauthorize IDEA following completion of this year's renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The current IDEA system has a significant problem with the over-identification of minority children, and has also been roundly criticized by local school officials for its burdensome paperwork requirements.

### Message of the Day

**IDEA is over-identifying minority children as disabled -- and it needs systemic reform before we can fully fund it.**

- ❑ *Switching a program from discretionary spending to mandatory spending, which the Senate proposes to do with IDEA, imposes a major change that should not be implemented without fully considering its impact on all IDEA programs.*
- ❑ *President Bush has proposed a billion-dollar increase in IDEA funding, but IDEA must be reformed so that this money is spent effectively for those disabled children who need it most.*

### DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- Last month, 99 Democrats joined 197 Republicans in voting to table a motion offered by Rep. John Baldacci (D-ME) to instruct House education conferees to adopt language passed by the Senate in S. 1 requiring mandatory full funding of IDEA. (*Roll Call Vote No. 238, 18 July 2001*)
- Since the GOP took control of the House six years ago, Republicans have more than doubled IDEA funding, increasing it by 173 percent -- an increase far larger than any made under Democrat control.
- Making IDEA a mandatory spending program will make it very difficult to reform its current structure.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

**"If you flood it with money before it gets reformed, you're going to bring out the worst in the system." Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) on Senate language requiring mandatory full funding of IDEA prior to next year's reauthorization (*National Journal*, August 4, 2001)**